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978-0-521-44748-5 - Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions

Haim Hazan

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Haim Hazan is a leading specialist on old age in anthropology, and he has published several monographs on particular communities of old people. The present book is a general essay on the realities of old age, as it is experienced, as opposed to the ideas about the old that are current in western societies. It argues that the construction of this world by outsiders is inevitably affected by deeply ingrained social attitudes and structures, such as the spatial segregation of the aged as a population, and the fear of death with which they are associated. By approaching the subject from a social constructionist perspective, and drawing on a variety of detailed ethnographic accounts of the old, the author describes a unique and nuanced social world. This is a sophisticated and original book, which should have a significant impact on a field still dominated by a 'social problems' approach.

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*Tel-Aviv University*



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*If youngsters say to you: construct, and elders – demolish, demolish; since construction by youth is deconstruction and deconstruction by elders is construction.*  
*(The Talmud: Megilah, p. 31)*

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## *Acknowledgements*

A book such as this owes its scope and content to the intersection of many academic disciplines – in our case: social gerontology, socio-cultural anthropology and sociology – and to the inspiration of literature, art and philosophy. It would be a futile exercise to track down the various paths leading to this end-product and to depict the mosaic of ideas and associations composing it. Furthermore, I claim sole responsibility for the nature and the presentation of the message and hence pointing at specific names, trends, studies or schools would not do them justice. I therefore reserve the offerings of gratitude to those who were directly involved in shaping the following pages.

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*Acknowledgements*

At this stage a personal note is in order. My interest in the existential enigma of ageing was bound up with the untimely death of three members of my family who did not reach old age in any sense of the parameters of this book. Thus I would like to dedicate the spirit of this book to the memory of my parents, Sima and David Hazan, and my father-in-law Sydney Keye.